

Report on Recommendations from the Testing Task Force
South Carolina Department of Education
April 11, 2005

The Testing Task Force, working in conjunction with the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), made a number of recommendations in their report presented to the EOC on February 14, 2005. In the intervening two months, all of the recommendations have been addressed to some degree. The following listing is intended to highlight some of the actions taken to date.

- Formative Tests
 - The Department is poised to provide flow-through funding to districts for the purchase of formative tests that meet specified criteria once funding is obtained.
 - The Department continues to work on revisions to the benchmark tests in mathematics.
- Computer Assessment
 - The Department is expanding computer assessment to include larger pilots in spring and summer for end-of-course testing and is working with its contractors to conduct comparability studies.
 - The Department has been exploring new products and the purchase of additional equipment as funding allows.
- Standards
 - The Department has developed a plan in each of the core content areas:
 - **Social studies:** Standards were developed using a new process that limits the number of standards and provides more clarity. The new standards are posted on the Web site and will be mailed to districts in hardcopy and on CD-ROM this week. New “Parent Standards” have been provided to the EOC. Support documents will be produced and posted by June 30, 2005.
 - **Science:** Standards have been drafted using a new process that limits the number of standards and provides more clarity. The new standards will go through a public review process prior to the development of a final draft. Support documents will be provided to educators.
 - **Mathematics:** The revision process will begin in spring 2006. Support documents are available for the standards that were adopted in 2000. Each standard will be placed in the appropriate cell of the new classification system (taxonomic overlay). Additional support documents are being developed that will group the standards according to “big ideas” or topics that span grade levels.
 - **English language arts (ELA):** The standards were revised in 2002. Writing support documents were made available to schools for the 2003–2004 school year, and support documents for the other three strands—reading, communications, and research—will be available by June 30, 2005 along with a taxonomic overlay. The offices of Assessment and Curriculum and Standards are collaborating to provide additional support to teachers on standards that have been deemed by district/school educators as problematic. This information will also be available by June 30.

- Release of Tests and Items
 - The Department is working with its contractors to determine which tests and items can be released.
 - The Department is conducting a study of the design of the Web site, which will have potential impact on the ease of locating information.
- Classroom Assessment
 - The Department is expanding its offerings to include a televised credit-bearing course.
 - The Department has submitted a federal grant proposal to supplement and study its classroom assessment activities.
- The Amount of Testing
 - The Department will eliminate the use of constructed-response items on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) in science and social studies, and reduce the number of constructed-response items on PACT mathematics.
 - Future plans by the Department include mechanisms for reducing the amount of field-testing on an annual basis.
- South Carolina Readiness Assessment (SCRA)
 - The Department continues its initiatives to reinforce appropriate implementation of and differentiation between SCRA and SCRAPI (the on-line ratings system).
 - The Department will implement a minimum statewide data collection plan and administrator verification system.
 - The Department is poised to implement a teacher-training plan once funding is provided.

In order to implement some of the recommendations, action by the Legislature would be required to amend the law and/or provide funding. These recommendations are listed below, along with recommendations that will require psychometric study for legal and technical defensibility.

Recommendations Requiring Changes in Law

- Testing should be reduced by developing a sampling design for science and social studies. In such a design every student would take either social studies or science each year, but not both, except in grades where census testing in science is required to meet NCLB requirements.
- Equate Algebra 1 and English 1 to grade level PACT so that students are not required to take both tests.
- A differentiated assessment plan should be developed that provides greater assessment focus, and therefore greater information, on certain subjects at particular grades. *[Note: Change in law required only if the differentiated assessment plan would alter testing of the four academic content areas.]*
- A task force should be convened to develop recommendations for alternative evidence and procedures that will allow students to meet graduation requirements even if they have failed High School Assessment Program (HSAP).
- Review policies requiring special needs students not on the diploma track to take HSAP more than once to determine feasibility of reducing additional testing based on decisions of IEP teams. *[Note: Amendment to Regulation 43-262 will go to State Board of Education tomorrow for second reading.]*
- Require passage of required courses in high school science and social studies in lieu of exit examinations in science and social studies.

- Develop, adopt or adapt a developmentally appropriate reading assessment for use in first and second grades and modify SCRA to include additional literacy assessment for kindergarten.

Recommendations Requiring Funding in FY06

- The state should provide a formative assessment system that allows educators to monitor student progress during the school year.
- The state should position itself to administer and score all assessments electronically.
- Develop and implement a long-term teacher-training plan designed to ensure the valid and reliable use of SCRA within classrooms.
- Conduct a controlled cost and program effectiveness study of on-line testing within our state program.
- Adopt a data warehouse that will make retrieval and analysis of student data easy for teachers and administrators.

Recommendations Requiring Psychometric Study

- Equating Algebra 1 and English 1 to grade level PACT so that students are not required to take both tests.
- Comparability of computer-delivered tests and paper-and-pencil forms.
- Reliable strand level reporting and associated reports.
- Vertically equating the PACT reading and mathematics tests.
- The construction of PACT at the cut scores and the change of cut scores.

Attached is documentation of current practice with respect to each of the recommendations. The documentation includes links to appropriate Web sites.